

Linda Clair
Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre, Australia – March 2020
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 6B – Thursday morning discussion session

Linda: How have you been going J.? You two have been sitting there very quietly the whole retreat. Have you done a retreat this long before?

Question: No, this is the first one. It's been very challenging. At one point there was this pure emotion of anger, which I don't usually feel, so I just sat with that. Eventually it dissipated but it was interesting. The guy that spoke earlier this week said the first three meditations for him were easier and then got more difficult. Mine's kind of the opposite. It's been more challenging in the morning but that's stopped the last two days and it's been mostly easier today, in some sense. But yes, really unexpected and amazing. In one of the meditations I felt I uncovered some warmth which is what I've been looking for. I've read that after a certain amount of time, or when you become enlightened, that warmth is a natural trait and I wondered how that worked. I feel maybe I got a little taste of it.

Linda: By warmth – can you describe it a bit more?

Question: It felt a bit different to love but it's probably the closest thing I could describe it as – unconditional and a very strong lack of judgement. That went one for pretty much the whole hour which was quite enjoyable.

Linda: Yes, and as I keep saying, you'll feel the effects afterwards. You'll be more aware of what happened in the weeks, months afterwards.

Question: We felt a big difference after the last one.

Linda: What sort of difference? (Different speaker.) If you don't want to talk, that's fine.

Question: I've just never felt alive before now, and I think I've been wasting my life thinking.

Linda: One thing I saw in the end was that everything that had happened in my life – things that I had seen as a waste, or I felt guilty about, or that I'd been a bad person or whatever – all were necessary and they're all a part of it. I suddenly saw the reason for everything and I stopped regretting anything that I'd done however awful or whatever. So try not to regret anything. Just appreciate that you're doing it now.

I didn't start till I was thirty-seven. I'm pretty sure you're not thirty-seven. (Laughing) So don't regret anything. Just appreciate that you're doing it now. That's what's important. That's another thing that happened: it was like it didn't matter how long it had taken or how hard it had been. It was so worth it and so amazing that there was no energy, or time, or point in regretting anything. A lot of people go through their whole lives not doing this, avoiding this, and judging people who do do it, saying they're selfish or whatever. It's all just fear. So it's just great that you're doing it. And it does feel like you're waking up. That's why they call it waking up – you feel suddenly alive.

Question: I *do* find myself judging people who aren't on this path though.

Linda: Don't worry about that. That will eventually go. And see that, really, they're your judgements of yourself that you're projecting onto other people. I can't say I've got no judgments now. Sometimes something comes up and then it goes. But years ago, yes, plenty! Really, it's what makes you suffer. And that love that J. was talking about, that's what real love is – the absence of judgement. That's what we're heading toward doing this – that absence of judgement, that unconditional love. Not, "I'll love you if you love me back, or if you give me something back." You can see someone at the tram stop and just feel this love for this person – you've got no idea who they are, just another human being. You might not ever see them again and you don't expect anything back, but that's what starts to happen, just this incredible, unconditional love where you give and don't expect anything back.

So don't worry about the judgments. Just see them. Don't judge yourself for judging because that will just feed the whole thing. Just see them and come back to your breath. And in a way, every thought you have is a judgment. That's what we want to be free from. And we want to feel alive, not half dead, wasting our lives thinking about what's going to happen next.

Every retreat is different and there'll be a different reaction after every retreat too. Sometimes you'll feel incredibly alive. Sometimes initially you can feel very emotional. Other times you'll just feel so exhausted. It changes, you just never know. But as the months go on you will notice things about yourself that are different.

Question: I have no idea why I'm crying. I was in a bliss state just five minutes ago. (Laughing)

Linda: Everyone has been through it, goes through it, will go through it again. I cried a lot during my practice.

Question: I'm usually an emotional person. But this whole retreat has been like all my emotions went out the door, which is great.

Linda: If you feel emotional after, that's normal. Everything gets stirred up. Sometimes you'll feel it during the retreat. Sometimes after. Sometimes you won't feel very emotional at all. You just never know. But it will stir things up and that's what needs to happen. That's why you're here.

Question: I just thought I'd report in generally. Mostly it's been fairly steady. Sometimes I get doubts about effort – my perennial question – and I have to trust that consistency is the best I can do. It's been fairly much a working retreat. This morning, this last sit, was very hard. I came to this retreat thinking I'd sit through the morning tea, which I've never done at retreat before. But it just hasn't seemed to be an option. I'm just flat-out getting through the sits. This morning I even wanted to get up in the walking. But I don't do that, so I didn't. It was really very intense getting through to the bell. But I do notice the difference that even though the pain's very strong, the fear, or the reaction to, it doesn't get me so much and I can trust the process, and trust that whatever's happening I just need to go through it. And this retreat I've had a lot of pain in my heart. It's new to have such consistent pain in my heart and going through to my shoulder blades and heat. I'm tired and way too hot! (Laughing) I can't believe I didn't bring enough cool clothes because I looked at the weather forecast – it's nothing to do with that, I just boil. But overall I feel trusting, and what helps me to trust my process and the pace is that I see changes outside of practice, as well as in it.

Linda: So yes, just stay consistent. Never be too rigid about what you do, like, "I don't get up in the walk." Sometimes do that. It can be harder to do that than to sit through because you'll start beating yourself up saying, "Oh, I'm a failure – I didn't sit through." Just change things around a little

bit more – make sure you do that. And never label yourself as something, as anything, “I’m this sort of person. I do this. I like this. I don’t like this.” Really look closely at all those seemingly little things that you think are you, and that make you who you are, because they don’t. You do still have your preferences of course but really look at those habits that might be just learned behaviour rather than natural aspects of you. To test that, do things a bit differently sometimes. But don’t go, “I’m not this sort of person. I’m this sort of person,” because in truth, you’re not a person.

It’s the little habits that we tend to overlook too. We see the important things and the not-so-important things – same as thoughts – but really, it’s all the little things that built up. So good.

Question: I’m just going to add that when I was sitting with this really intense pain I also – alongside a part that was wanting the bell to go – I felt such gratitude for the fact that I can *be* here.

Question: I’d like to say that your teachings, to me, have always been clear, concise, and direct and there’s no mistaking what you’re saying. And you’re the only truth that I’ve ever heard and that makes you quite confronting to me quite often, because you speak the pure truth. I just wanted to say that to kick things off. As far as my sits go, I’ve started counting which I’ve struggled with in the past. This is the first time I’ve really got into it, and it’s been a really boon for me and kept me on track. And got me into the body – probably been in my body more than I ever had in any other retreat. I haven’t been on a retreat for about seven years.

Linda: Seven years. Yes, I was really happy to see you two booked in.

Question: Well, one or two days over the years with you and a bit with R. but besides that, no. So I was quite apprehensive about coming. I was hoping for Coronavirus, trees falling down, death in the family, whatever. (Laughter) But anyway, I’m happy I came now, of course. But there was a lot of resistance – more than I’ve ever had in the past.

Linda: Great. Thanks, R.

Question: I’ve had quite an amazing, beautiful day. All of the sits have been very much with the breath. There were thoughts there but I was coming back to the breath. And my body felt more relaxed than ever. Normally at this stage I’d be (tired) but it was quite the opposite. But the last sit I was sitting, and I was in my body, and then it just came up – the last time I spoke to you was about seeing an aspect which wasn’t very nice about myself – but this was seeing another aspect which we perceive as good, and I saw really clearly it was the same, the other side of the same coin. When I saw that, it was like I was in this expanse. I had a really strong sensation that was like joy, but not like joy which I’ve experienced before. I don’t know if that’s quite the right word. (Crying) It was quite beautiful.

Linda: Have you ever felt it like that before?

Question: Never. I could feel it in my body but also in my heart and everywhere. So obviously after that I was trying to get back there. Well, I thought, I have to talk to you and say it so I can leave it.

Linda: Good. That’s wonderful, beautiful but don’t try and repeat it. That’s the temptation – to try and repeat it. Use it as an incentive without trying to repeat it which is a difficult thing to do. But the harder you try to repeat it the more elusive it will become. So just trust that it’s there in you. It’s not like you’ve lost anything. It’s just that there’s more work to do and that is humility. With realisations like that the most important thing is how you deal with it afterwards. What’s happened is important and wonderful but it’s how you deal with that realisation. If you keep trying to repeat it

and go over and over and, “Oh, that was so amazing,” it will dilute the whole thing. So you need to trust that that is real and it’s in you and you’re never going to lose it. But you will feel it again. You don’t know when but just don’t try and repeat it.

Question: I’ve been blown away from day one, with being away from a retreat for so long and coming back and stepping back in, how overwhelming and strong it would be. Like R. was saying, I’ve used my breath and my body so much more this time, and was able to use the counting quite easily. And I felt my body like I’ve never felt it before. I’m here and it’s the best thing I’ve done. I’ve had the pain as well. Monday there was quite a significant pain in my knee and I thought it was because I hadn’t sat for so long. I had two intense days wanting to sit. Then I had to move and use the chair for a few sits and get some padding. It felt like it was bruised and I thought to take it easy. I went to bed and it disappeared. Then other pain that I’ve had in my lower back, in my bum, shoulder have been really intense. One evening I was here. When you’re experiencing it and you’re in it you just don’t know, “Do I just step out of this and walk away and go to bed? Or do you just keep staying here?” I got up and went to bed! I’ve felt it all this week. I think we’re all sharing it. Thanks everyone.

Linda: Yes. Well, you came. You made the decision to come and you didn’t pull out even though R. wanted to. I could feel that actually. I wouldn’t have been surprised to see your name taken off.

Question: We kept saying to each other, day by day, “Just go through one day at a time.” (Laughing) And then sit by sit.

Linda: It’s Thursday; there’s only another day. Who knows what could happen tomorrow.

Question: The other night I managed to sit for the whole hour of the evening session and kept the counting going all the time. So I was very pleased with myself because it’s been a long time and I was never able to do that. Just to keep on counting and not to wriggle around or do something else, or else go into a little dream.

Linda: Very good. That’s great.

Question: I’ve been trying for all these years to do that and finally did.

Linda: I always remember someone at Crafers who’d been counting for quite a while and one day she said, “I’ve got to two!” (Laughter) It was so funny.

Question: It sort of felt a bit like that. I could get to ten of course but I couldn’t keep going – there’d be a gap where I’d have a little daydream.

Linda: So you did it the whole hour?

Question: Yes, it was nice. And it seemed as if the pain then got less. I don’t know why that would happen, but that doesn’t matter.

Linda: Well, there wasn’t as much fear. It doesn’t mean that the more pain you feel, the more fear there is – it’s not that sort of thing. But I think from what you described, it’s probably (that). The quality of the pain does change when there’s less fear.

Question: It was different to being seen as bad.

Linda: So more peace. (Yes.) I told you. (Laughing) You didn't believe me did you?

Question: I wasn't quite sure what you meant.

Linda: Neither was I really.

Question: Because there's lots of different sorts of peace isn't there. So you didn't know either?

Linda: No, I just say stuff. I don't know what I'm saying. But you've earned it B. You've been doggedly determined.

Question: For about seventy years. When I first got interested, that would have been seventy years ago. I was interested in ordinary things but I didn't think they were worth being interested in. So I thought, there must be something else in life to do, that we need to do or that we could do.

Linda: Yes, there must be something other than just this, even if your life is pretty comfortable and enjoyable.

Question: I didn't have a very good life when I was young. Well, I don't know. It's silly to judge it isn't it? Some people have really horrible lives don't they? Mine wasn't really like that. I suppose I had the personality things that could make me feel unhappy without actually objectively being so bad. So if you feel like that and you can't carry it with you all the time then that's what you've got. Anyway, I'm very grateful, like L. said, to everyone's that's helped me. Not only you, Linda, but other teachers, church.

Linda: Thanks.

Question: Can I add to that? During the time that I've been with you, B. has been around and I've thought, if B. can do it I can. So B. has been a great inspiration.

Linda: Yes, I think you have actually. You've been an inspiration for a lot of people.

Question: I have kind of a technical question. What happened in this last sit was an immense amount of pain in my bum, which I was so determined to sit with this time. I've been sick for two days in my stomach and I wasn't going to let it get the best of me this time. I sat and it peaked and then the bell didn't bloody go! (Laughing) Often when I've sat like that in the past the bell goes and that's the end of it – you can get off your bum. And this time the bell didn't go. It kind of calmed down a little bit and then it started to come again, and I couldn't deal with it twice. Have you got anything to say about the endurance of it? It's just never happened to me that way before – the bloody bell didn't go. Then I couldn't deal with it anymore and I felt sick, and back in panic-attack mode the way I've always been with it. So on the one hand I felt a victory. But on the other hand it was like, "You have to do it again and again and again."

Linda: If you're feeling a bit sick, genuinely sick, don't push yourself too much. It's good what you did in a way. But never assume anything has peaked, because you really don't know what that peak is. You're assuming something has peaked. You said it peaks and then the bell goes and this time it was different. A lot of this practice is really dealing with change and not getting into this habit of assuming that this happens and then this happens and then this happens. So just use it to see your attachment – and it might only be subtle – of things happening a certain way, in a certain order, and this happens, and then that happens. The fact that it changed, I felt, was a good thing.

If it does get too much and you feel like it's too much it's not a crime to get up and have a rest, especially if you're feeling a bit physically not a hundred percent. So just use it to see more about your assumptions, your judgments of how things should go and how they usually go, because you have to get used to things changing and changing more and more quickly and never being able to assume or predict anything. So really, just see that there was this expectation there in you and that expectation made you suffer even more.

So you truly, truly never know what's going to happen. And when you're sitting like this you almost never feel like you're dealing with it properly – like you could do it better. That keeps you going in a way, but don't let it get too much in the way too.